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AUTHOR Olson, Arthur R.
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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of a series of reports addressing the most critical issues confronting state boards of education throughout the United States. Each report attempts to present a concise, informative review and analysis of the best and most current information available on one of these critical topics. This booklet focuses on issues related to the use of educational accountability and assessment models at the state level. Section 1 contains a brief overview and summary of the booklet; section 2 presents a review and analysis of educational accountability and assessment by Arthur R. Olson; section 3 presents a number of action alternatives recommended by the staff of the National Association of State Boards of Education; and section 4 contains footnotes and a brief annotated bibliography prepared by the author of section 2. (Author/JG)

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THE IMPERATIVE OF LEADERSHIP

IV

A REPORT ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

EA 008 826

NASBE

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PREFACE

This report on *Accountability and Assessment* represents the fourth in a series of twelve papers on critical issues affecting State Boards of Education. Publication of these reports is made available to all NASBE members by funds provided by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10, Title V, Section 505) provided through the state of New York.

This report is organized into four sections. Section I contains on *Overview Summary* on the research text. Section II is the complete research text — *Accountability and Assessment.* Section III presents *Action Alternatives.* Section IV is the *Appendix* containing Footnotes and an Annotated Bibliography.

This organizational format was chosen to meet the needs of several types of readers. The *Overview Summary* is intended for the reader who is concerned with the subject but for various reasons does not wish to be burdened with detail. Section II through IV (containing research text, pragmatic alternatives and review sources) are provided for the technical reader who wishes an indepth study of the topic.

NASBE wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Arthur R. Olson, director of the Cooperative Accountability Project, who authored the research text on *Accountability and Assessment.*

James M. Connor
NASBE President

November 1975
Denver, Colorado

SECTION I
OVERVIEW SUMMARY

Educational accountability for public schools tries to determine and report answers to these questions: What do you want to do? What did you actually do? How much did it cost? Was it effective? Can you do it better? The essence of accountability is *responsibility* — responsibility for producing the learning situations that will most effectively achieve agreed-upon educational goals.

Statements of goals or intentions, therefore, become the starting point. They provide the overall direction for the educational program and the basis for delineation of highly specific objectives, i.e., measurable expected outcomes. Broad participation by educators and citizens alike is vital to the effective determination of both goals and objectives.

Important aspects of accountability programs include:

- Assessment and evaluation — information on where you are and how far you've come
- Cost-effective accounting — relating educational outcomes to financial, human, material, and time resources expended
- Management information systems — providing for accurate, complete, current, and accessible data
- Management by objectives — a means of attaining institutional performance accountability.

In addition, accountability supports the concept of teacher evaluation based on student achievement — not for the purpose of blaming or eliminating teachers who fall short in advancing the learning of their pupils, but rather as a method of appraisal leading to improved instructional procedures. This concept does not imply that teachers are solely accountable for results, but proposes *system accountability* in which all elements of the school and school district share the responsibility for educational outcomes.

A form of educational accountability for State Boards of Education has been expressed in many state laws for some time. However, with the adoption of specific educational accountability laws in more than 30 states, State Boards have been given more explicit mandates for continual review of the overall progress of the state-guided education system. Thus State Boards, working through the state education agencies to which they provide policy direction, must provide leadership in the development and maintenance of both local and statewide accountability efforts.

In carrying out this responsibility, it is important to consider the political realities, such as: the attitudes and influence of teachers' organizations, desires for autonomy by local school districts, the concern of minority groups over cultural bias in testing procedures, and the political use of accountability information vs. the taxpaying citizen's right to know what is going on. These and other "vested interests" must be recognized; but it is possible, and highly desirable, to blend varied points of view in an effort to share the tasks leading to improvement in education. All those involved in the educational process, then, must be reassured that accountability is *diagnostic* and *analytical* rather than judgmental. In this light, the components of a total accountability program gain a productive and optimistic frame of reference.

Establishing an accountability model requires thoughtful deliberation in clarifying ultimate goals and careful planning. One neglected dimension, for example, is the effect of the educational "social setting" on carrying out accountability procedures. To successfully achieve accountability, the following elements are vital: a sense of motivation to be accountable; a spirit of inquiry; teamwork and personal responsibility; and the mechanism for analyzing, communicating and adjusting procedures. It is important to recognize that accountability is as much an *attitude* as a set of techniques.

A great variety of theoretical models, as well as the reports of various state accountability efforts, are readily available for review and guidance in developing or revising accountability programs. However, the Cooperative Accountability Project concludes that these elements should be part of an effective accountability model:

Goal Review and Development — with community involvement, board of education adoption and policy statements

Needs Assessment - with determination as to where the system falls short of meeting goals, followed by establishment of new priorities

Objectives Development — with the identification of desired educational results and plans for the most effective ways to accomplish these results

Education Programs — development, implementation, and modification if necessary

Assessment and Evaluation — with the identification of program results as related to desired goals and evaluation of program strengths, weaknesses, needs, and cost factors

Reporting and Disclosure — including results of assessment and recommendations from evaluation leading to policy and program adjustments

Present demands for educational leadership are so compelling that state-initiated policies and activities must be sharply upgraded. Our new educational realities require action in terms of being accountable, flexible, and attuned to the times. State Boards of Education should take positive steps to provide leadership in this direction.

SECTION II
ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

Dr. Arthur R. Olson
Director, Cooperative Accountability Project

Accountability: What is It?

Defining accountability is not a simple task. Because it has been interpreted to the point of saturation, it is now necessary to extract from these descriptions the basic and workable elements of the accountability concept.

After careful study of the definitions by noted educators, the Cooperative Accountability Project defines the concept this way:

> Educational accountability serves to explain the results that are being achieved by public elementary and secondary schools. It provides a basis for developing understanding of the relationship between quality in education and available resources in order to make educational improvements.

In other words, educational accountability programs are trying to determine and report answers to these questions:

> What do you want to do?
> What did you actually do?
> How much did it cost?
> Was it effective?
> Can you do it better?

The nub of accountability is *reponsibility* — responsibility for producing the learning situations that will most effectively achieve agreed-upon educational goals. To fully understand the accountability concept, we must explore its relationship to:

- Goals and Objectives
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Cost-Effective Accounting
- A Management Information System for Decision Making
- Management by Objectives
- Evaluation of Teachers
- Continuation, Promotion, or Dismissal of Teachers

Accountability Relationship to Goals and Objectives

Educational accountability programs start with a definition of purposes and priorities. Statements of goals, or intentions, address the general question, "What are we trying to accomplish?" A clear delineation of these goals is essential to better understanding between educators, parents, and concerned citizens regarding the purpose of public education and the results against which educational activities can be measured and evaluated.

Primary factors in the successful establishment of goals for any school or school system include:

Broad Participation. Goals cannot be conceived in a state of isolation. It is essential that all the actors in the educational scene be appropriately involved: legislature, state department of education, State Board of Education, local boards of education, district administrators and supervisors, school superintendents, principals, teachers, teachers' organizations, citizens' committees, parents, students, and consultants.[1]

Consensus. It is also essential that general agreement be reached on major educational goals. This involves give and take, and such goals should be subject to trial and future review and revision.

Alternative Programs. The final solution to achieving consensus may well include proposals and programs involving alternative schools. Be it the open classroom, a 12-month school year, educational vouchers, or other alternatives, what has been termed the "consumer's choice"[2] must be reasonably satisfied.

Needs Assessment. Determination of educational goals will benefit from an identification of student needs. Whether by means of measurement, the study of educational indicators, or other methods, it is only logical to consider the nature of instructional programs that will help fill the gaps in students' knowledge and prepare them to cope with their life situations - both present and anticipated.

Priorities. Annual educational priorities appropriate to grade levels, student achievement, and current social concerns should be included in the determination of goals. An attempt to achieve parallel state and local school district goals will be an aid in the setting of priorities. The obvious advantage is commitment all along the way and mutually supportive efforts.

Fiscal Considerations. Accountability requires that program goals be related to budgetary concerns. Fiscal planning generally is the responsibility of the Chief State School Officer, governor, and legislature on the state level and a business manager, superintendent, and board of education within a school district. But current accountability programs call for a wider involvement in the determination of both fiscal and program goals. Special effort may be required to equip participants with the necessary skills for monetary considerations in the establishment of program goals.

Goal statements provide an overall design — an emphasis or direction — toward which educational programs will be guided. Usually stated in quite general terms, they are then restated in much more specific objectives in terms of expected measurable outcomes. For example,

if a stated *goal* is increased literacy of school children, one specific *objective* might be the setting of a minimum level of improvement — in the number of words read per minute, at a pre-determined degree of comprehension, within a given time frame.

Broad participation is as vital to spelling out the objectives as it is to the determination of goals. The expertise of teachers and supervisory staff is valuable here, and the involvement of both parents and pupils will enhance their personal satisfaction in achieving the chosen objectives.

Accountability Relationship to Assessment and Evaluation

Information per se, regardless of how intricately stored and processed, does not answer policy questions or make decisions of lifelong importance to students. It does, however, provide a means to an end. The accountability process — with all its informational ramifications — is intended to provide a practical *base* for effective decision making. Assessment and evaluation efforts should give the State Board of Education and the legislature information on the quality of educational programs and indications that they are realistic in terms of cost. The techniques used should be sufficiently flexible to allow for continual review and feedback to serve as a guide for program development or revision.

A *statewide* system of assessment and evaluation can provide, in the most economical manner, information for a variety of users: state and local officials, legislators, department and board of education personnel, researchers, school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the general public. It avoids costly duplication of efforts and provides a broad base for data comparison.

This component of the total accountability system is of little value, however, if the people who must maintain, judge, and utilize it are unprepared for their roles or if they have negative, preconceived notions as to its ultimate purpose. Steps essential to the introduction of an assessment and evaluation program include: (1) analyzing the current situation; (2) determining which elements of the evaluation process will prove most useful; (3) determining how evaluation data can best be collected, processed, stored, and used; and (4) obtaining technical assistance in developing the program. Steps 3 and 4 involve questions relative to the kind of data bank most serviceable for the particular state and schools involved.

Establishment of assessment and evaluation procedures will benefit from a study of operations already in existence in many states. Also worthy of consideration are the effects of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP uses highly skilled professionals in the continual creation of educational objectives for a number of subject areas. While some teachers may protest the blanket acceptance of such materials, certainly selective review could be beneficial in the development of their own procedures. Likewise, state or local school districts may find it valuable to compare their own assessment and evaluation results with those annually released on a national level by NAEP.

Accreditation procedures currently are being analyzed in relation to the accountability movement to determine how the best elements of both may complement each other in their application. This suggests the most essential element of the assessment and evaluation component: *utilization of results*. Purely academic maneuvers in the gathering and storing of data are of virtually no value. Just as evaluation must follow assessment, so much the results of this effort be directed toward improving the total educational program.

Accountability Relationship to Cost-Effective Accounting

Cost is a measure of the resources that go into an educational program. *Effectiveness* measures what comes out. Cost-effectiveness equates expenditures with results.

The ability to relate educational outcomes to financial, human, material, and time resources is of top priority today. Each of these resources carries a price tag. To respond to the monetary concerns of both taxpayers and lawmakers, those responsible for developing educational programs must analyze alternative approaches to resource allocations in terms of cost-effectiveness.

To initiate the cost-effective cycle, a school or district should utilize (1) a program-oriented budgeting system, (2) a budgeting system uniformly applied across all levels of the organizational structure, and (3) a computer to facilitate the timely and accurate processing and analysis of data.

One problem related to cost-effectiveness concerns the variables inevitably involved. Students differ, teachers vary, social settings and concerns change. These and other variations must be reckoned with in relating cost to effectiveness. For example, the effectiveness of a reading program depends on the background and interests of the students, the competence of the teachers, the materials used, and the time allocated to the subject — as well as the amount of money spent on the program.

Cost-effective accounting can be applied successfully to support programs (transportation, cafeteria, etc.) as well as to instructional programs. Analysis in both areas provides valuable data as the basis for effective decision making.

Accountability Relationship to a Management Information System

Management functions have become increasingly important and demanding at all educational levels during the past ten years. State departments of education as well as local school districts now must prepare for their respective higher governmental agencies more complex and comprehensive reports, surveys, and statistical documentation. Moreover, the administration of today's school or school district involves a wide variety of services. Thus the public school has become a diverse delivery system intricately involved in the management tasks of controlling, directing, and being accountable for a complex operation.

With an effective management information system (MIS), state and local educational agencies can coordinate their management efforts more efficiently. The key to success of both the operation of such a system and its accountability application in terms of decision making and

analysis is the *quality* of the management information, i.e., the accuracy, completeness, currency, and accessibility of accumulated data. An effective system also requires careful human judgements concerning what information actually is needed and what may be ignored lest the MIS becomes a giant but futile exercise in data processing.

There remains much to be learned from noneducational organizations about the creation and maintenance of the educational management information system. Despite the efforts of many school districts, techniques in this field must still be considered primitive.

Accountability Relationship to Management by Objectives

Management by objectives (MBO) is well known in business and industrial sectors. It has been defined as a system calling for managers and employees to reach agreement about job goals at the beginning of each work period. During the work period, employees are given wide latitude in choice of work methods. At the end of the period, the results are jointly reviewed against the agreed-upon goals and an assessment made of the degree of success achieved.

As this management concept has moved into the educational field, the questions being raised by teachers, administrators, and school boards include: Is there an improvement in educational performance as a result of this MBO method? Does this concept contribute to educational accountability?

U. S. Commissioner of Education Terrel H. Bell has noted that management by objectives is becoming an increasing importance: "Its focus is upon institutional performance rather than the performance of individuals. It is, therefore, not as threatening to teachers and other staff members as are those accountability programs that center attention on the specific performance of individual teachers." He concludes: "MBO provides the school administrator with a systematic procedure for involving his staff in problem-solving efforts .... (It) keeps all staff members looking at the same targets and pulling toward performance outcomes .... accepted as desirable objectives .... MOB provides the road map that all can read and from which all can attain a certain sense of momentum and accomplishment..."[3]

The evidence favoring management by objectives is clearly expressed in Commissioner Bell's thirteen steps for achieving MBO.[4] They deserve careful consideration by believers and skeptics alike. A system which allows the expression of varied points of view is both creative and productive. Most important of all, this process forces school boards, administrators, and staffs to analyze the question "Where are we now?" and to establish strategic objectives for one-, two-, even five-year projections which will apply to the ultimate question: "What are we trying to accomplish?"

Accountability Relationship to the Evaluation of Teachers

It is natural for parents and taxpayers to seek assurance that publich school students are protected from incompetent teachers. Evidence has existed for some time to indicate that the success of a teacher is reflected in the progress of his or her pupils. However, this premise has too seldom been followed by those responsible for appraising instructors. A long-established tendency has been to consider such factors as longevity, advance courses completed, general background, classroom procedures, personality, and even mode of dress. While these considerations may have their place in a total evaluation picture, it is unrealistic to allow them to dominate teacher appraisal.

Some school districts, however, are beginning to successfully determine a teacher's competency to influence specified changes in student behavior or achievement. Educational accountability supports this means of evaluation — not for the purpose of blaming or eliminating teachers who fall short in advancing the learning of their pupils — but rather as a method of appraisal which can lead to improvement in structional techniques.

Those who oppose the use of student achievement as a method for teacher evaluation criticize the measurement methods used. They state that standardized tests do not span the full breadth and depth of specific curriculum goals or content. The most reasonable answer to this argument rests with the move toward criterion- or objective-referenced measurement materials developed at the state or school district level. This method of measurement allows for full coverage of specific instructional programs and thus recognition of teachers' successful accomplishments in relation to their particular objectives.

The contention also has been made that measurement of pupil progress does not reveal *why* the teacher is or is not successful. Analysis of the whys and wherefores of success or failure in the teaching process is admittedly complex, involving conditions both in and outside the classroom. But this is why schools have supervisors and administrators whose responsibility it is to search out the answers to the reasons why some teachers have less than favorable results in a given situation. It is illogical to fault the measurement methods used, which at least indicate problems, in preference to not knowing that problems exist.

Having detected difficulties in the instructional process, state and local administrators should be (and some are) developing "improvement packages" to help diagnose teaching strengths and weaknesses and to suggest improved teaching strategies. It is encouraging to note that a number of state departments of education have recognized their responsibility for leadership in this area and have given priority attention to improving teaching methods.

Accountability Relationship to Continuation, Promotion or Dismissal of Teachers

Accountability has never intended the teacher to be a scapegoat. While some educational organizations have fanned the flames of the "firing" aspect of accountability, reports of teachers losing their jobs due to the application of this concept cannot be traced.

To begin with, the large majority of teachers are protected by tenure laws. After successful completion of a basic period of employment, dismissal on the grounds of incompetence is very difficult. More important here, however, is a primary aspect to the accountability concept, aptly stated by Leon Lessinger in a speech entitled "The Teacher is Not Solely Accountable: System Accountability." Dr. Lessinger emphasized that "the teacher probably is the unit that ought to be addressed last. Actually, the primary unit of an accountability program is the school and the school district..."[5]

The question of whether or not the profession can successfully relate continuation or promotion to the accountability process depends upon the schools' willingness to define the specific roles of its personnel. Educators have been slow to identify what should be required in any given job. This, of course, is the key to teacher accountability. We can determine a person's effectiveness only if we have first decided what is required of that person as he or she relates to the student.

Properly implemented, the concept of the basic job description can provide to the public the reassurance that schools are holding personnel accountable. In turn, the process provides security to the teacher who knows that his or her job has been defined and that assistance will be provided, if needed, to help meet the stated job objectives.

THE STATE BOARD'S ROLE IN ACCOUNTABILITY

With variations in terminology, state laws direct State Boards of Education to exercise general supervision over the public schools and to provide leadership in adopting policies, rules, and regulations concerning quality programs to meet the needs of the state's students. The State Board, in most instances, also is charged with the responsibility to *appraise* the public schools and to make recommendations for improvement. Thus a form of educational accountability has been expressed in state laws for some time.

With the adoption of specific educational accountability laws in more than 30 states, State Boards of Education are even more explicitly directed to accomplish continual review of their own mandates and the overall progress of the state-guided education system. Certainly the mandates are clear. It now remains for State Boards to move forward in implementing the duties that have been outlined for them.

In discussing the role of State Boards of Education in relation to accountability, it is only realistic to consider also the position of the state *departments* of education for which the boards are responsible in terms of policies, programs, and activities.

Over the years the state education agency has exerted limited influence in terms of the broader concepts of accountability. Most decisions related to this process have been left to the local school district. And even when state departments have been involved in accountability-type exercises for accreditation purposes, this procedure has not been result oriented. Reviews generally have focused on staff, facilities, equipment, materials, pupil-teacher ratios, etc., rather than school achievement. A basic difficulty with this accreditation approach is that it traps too many people into confusing *means* with *ends*. It concentrates attention on the means of education without questioning whether these means are having any constructive impace on the intellectual, social, or personal development of the student.

Furthermore, accreditation processes to date generally have involved only professional educators working behind closed doors. This not only results in professional entanglements but clogs the communication channels. If the accountability and accreditation concepts are to be interwoven, the public must be involved from beginning to end.

The state education agency now is faced with a changing situation. These agencies are expected to assume a role in educational accountability beyond the basic accreditation requirements. For the most part, they are not prepared for this additional responsibility, and there are few proven models to serve as guidelines. Thus special skills and procedures must be developed quickly to meet the insistent demands of legislators and the taxpaying public for whom accountability has elicited strong appeal.

In a presentation to the American Educational Research Association, Henry S. Dyer of Educational Testing Service indicated four good reasons for the State Board of Education to establish clear policies relating to accountability:

1. The accountability process should provide to administrators and teachers in every school district basic information for determining the effectiveness of their educational programs in sufficient detail to indicate what is needed to continually strengthen those programs.
2. The accountability process should provide to the State Board of Education basic information to guide allocation of professional services and state funds in a manner designed to equalize educational opportunities for all students in the state.
3. The accountability process periodically should provide to the state legislature and the general public understandable information concerning the progress of the state educational system as a whole and local districts individually.
4. The state accountability process should be carefully coordinated with local school district assessment and evaluation efforts so that every student has the opportunity to examine his or her own progress within the educational system and, with their teachers, to chart a course toward individual objectives.[6]

Thus it is realistically suggested that accountability programs should be designed to aid administrators, teachers, state departments of education, legislators, the public in general, and the student in particular. In turn, it stands to reason that the *leadership* behind a coordinated accountability effort must rest with the State Board of Education working through the state education agency to which it provides policy direction.

POLITICAL REALITIES

Educators, legislators, school board members, and other educationally related personnel often are categorized as impartial benefactors of the instructional system. Actually they are human beings with preferences, predilections, and political orientations that unavoidably affect their involvement in the accountability process. While it is impossible to disentangle all

the personality factors, it is valuable — in thinking about the State Board's role — to assess certain political realities which can be reasonably documented in light of accountability's first decade of existence. In particular, we should consider:

- Educational Association Views
- SEA/LEA Relationships
- Minority Groups
- Political Use of Accountability Information vs. The Public's "Right to Know"

Educational Association Views

Recent years have witnessed educational association efforts to determine not only their own particular roles but also to identify their place in the overall educational power structure. While these organizations generally relate more directly with local school boards, State Boards must maintain a firm position with respect to teachers' groups because of the statewide implications of their views and actions.

Educational association reaction to accountability has been substantial and often negative. Some groups have taken the position that much of the accountability legislation is unworkable because educational goals are vague; objectives are inconclusive and unmeasurable; students are individuals who cannot be categorized; and measurement tools are invalid, unreliable, out of date, or unfair. In addition, they contend that funds urgently needed for education programs are being diverted to accountability efforts which merely reinforce the educational bureaucracy. Because associations see their power base residing in teachers speaking collectively, they resist the notion of individual teacher participation in program planning. They argue that if teachers are not representing their organizational stance, they speak only for themselves; thus one of the most influential groups in the educational community is being disregarded.

While many valid questions have been raised by the education associations, these groups and the accountability concept share many of the same motivations. Thus incompatibility should not be considered a foregone conclusion.

For example, on the question of testing, the National Education Association (NEA) "strongly urges the elimination of group standardized intelligence, aptitude and achievement tests to assess student potential or achievement until completion of a critical appraisal, review, and revision of current testing programs." At the same time, however, an NEA Task Force acknowledges that "some of the measurement and evaluation tools .... currently in use contain satisfactory validity and reliability requirements and serve useful purposes when properly administered and interpreted." The Task Force concludes that "the major use of tests should be for the improvement of instruction — for diagnosis of learning difficulties and for prescribing learning activities in response to learning needs."[6]

Most proponents of educational accountability concur fully with this statement. They recommend that concerted efforts be made to improve measurement practices in the interest of improving the total education program. However, accountability does call for measurement beyond the diagnostic application. Local and State School Boards also must have information on student performance so that all factors in overall program quality may be taken into account in educational decision making.

Teachers generally have stated their willingness to be held accountable *if* they are included in making decisions that will help them teach successfully. They want a stronger voice in the determination of school conditions, policies, and programs. The plea is for *shared* accountability, which certainly is appropriate to the concept of system accountability. Continuing dialogue among teachers, administrators, and school board members is essential if accountability roles are to be defined and accepted.

SEA/LEA Relationships

Under our Constitution, public education is a function reserved for the states, although substantial authority has been delegated over the years to the local school district. School districts like this, and some State Boards feel that better decisions are reached with greater local community involvement. But with increased financial support for the operation of the schools coming from state and federal allocations, a larger number of basic educational decisions now are being made by the state legislatures. This development has a direct bearing on the taxpayers' desire for accountability information. Delegation of the operation of the schools to local school districts releases the state department from its legal responsibility; the question is how long can this arrangement survive when, as a result, educational opportunities across district boundary lines have become highly uneven.

Local control over classroom instruction can and should be maintained, but this does not mean that the state is to stand on the sidelines. The hope for the future concerning SEA/LEA relationship rests on mutual respect, cooperation, and a concerted effort on all levels toward carefully conceived goals and objectives, improved instructional programs, documented educational outcomes, and continuous community involvement.

Minority Groups

Minorities and majorities alike expect all those associated with the educational enterprise to be accountable. They want to know their children are learning.

Initially, educational accountability gained considerable momentum from a minority concern, resulting in its application to dropout prevention and bilingual education programs. Management tools to determine program effectiveness vs. the dollars spent on these activities were encouraged by the U. S. Office of Education.

And yet some of the basic components of accountability appear to lead to controversy. For example, reaching a consensus on educational goals acceptable to a pluralistic society has caused community concern. In fact, some minority groups have pressed for alternative schools in cases where goals have not been generally agreed upon. The education voucher to allow for

options outside the public school system has grown out of this problem.

Another basic concern relates to the tools used for the measurement of student learning. Accountability requires procedures to evaluate educational effectiveness as well as the academic successes and failures of the students. Accordingly, standardized tests are widely used to determine school performance. Objections arise from minorities when there is evidence of a cultural bias built into the measurement instruments, or when the results are used for the tracking or grouping of students. Some have seen grouping as a way to foil integration. One Black parent, long active in the struggle for civil rights, stated: "Giving those tests and then placing children in groups is for one purpose only and that is to segregate. Once a child is put in a low group, there is no way to advance himself. It is the minorities and the poor who suffer most from the grouping procedures."

Wendell Rivers, in a speech prepared for the National Forum on Educational Accountability, suggested these key factors relating to standardized tests:

- Tests used with populations on which they were standardized are fairly good predictors of academic success.
- Test developers and producers should be accountable for informing users as to the limitations of their assessment devices in regard to their use with minority individuals.

Dr. Rivers also offered several suggestions that deserve State Board consideration:

- Construct instruments that will diagnose and give educators guidance in determining minority children's creative abilities.
- Identify competent minority persons to monitor and guide research conducted with minority individuals for the purpose of promulgating adequate assessment instruments.
- Elicit suggestions, support and criticism (positive and negative) from minority professionals who have the skills, knowledge and experience to make reliable impact on the test distributors and users.
- Survey minority groups for instruments they've developed and used successfully with minority and majority groups.
- Encourage minority group members, through grant programs, to develop and publish adequate assessment instruments for minorities in education, employment, and government.[8]

Instead of backing away from problems facing minorities, State Boards must base their leadership decisions on what is best educationally, not on what is politically expedient. If this is not done, the courts will continue to increase their control over the operation of the schools. The accountability process is not designed to sidestep the minority student. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Equalizing learning opportunities is a prime way by which education can be "brought to account."

Political Use of Accountability Information vs. The Public's "Right to Know"

A steady flow of information to various audiences is basic to the accountability process. As noted by communication authorities Erwin Bettinghaus and Gerald Miller, "telling an individual or an organization to 'be accountable' is not sufficient. If no mechanism exists for reporting back to the various publics that originally demanded accountability, the frustrations responsible for producing the demand for accountability will remain unsatisfied."[8]

Citizens pay the educational bills, and they have a right to know what is being accomplished with their funds. Politically, also, it is best that the public know what is going on. Experience has shown that when facts are missing, the inclination is simply to fault "the system" categorically. However, when all channels of communication are open, the informed person is more likely to assist in providing solutions to problems.

According to Gene V. Glass in "The Many Faces of Educational Accountability," an "accountable relationship between seller and buyer involves three elements: (1) disclosure concerning the product or service being sold, (2) product or performance testing, and (3) redress in the event of false disclosure or poor performance. Lessinger never said it better than when he called accountability the ability to deliver on promises . . . In the schooling industry, the public is the buyer and teachers and administrators are the sellers."[9] Methods of fostering accountability, then, should be judged on how well boards of education encourage teachers and administrators at all levels to "tell it like it is" to the layman who pays the bills.

The purpose of disclosure in this concept is the improvement of education through the sharing of the tasks which lead to achieving agreed-upon goals. Thus accountability, with its inclusion of the release of information, serves as the foundation for educational responsibility.

When accountability becomes a means of "pinning the blame" for education's problems, it has gone awry. Resentment naturally follows, and the result is a self-defeating political game. All individuals, groups, and agencies related to the education process must be reassured that accountability is *diagnostic* and *analytical* rather than judgmental. In this light, disclosure as well as all the other components of the total accountability process gains a productive and optimistic frame of reference.

ESTABLISHING AN ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

Educational accountability, as any new and involved project, requires thoughtful deliberation in clarifying ultimate goals and ample time for the planning process. A few key points will be mentioned here. A full discussion may be found in a review of a growing body of information available through the State Educational Accountability Repository (SEAR).[11]

Three vital factors in establishing an accountability program are suggested by Frank B. Womer in his monograph, *Developing a Large Scale Assessment Program*:[12]

1. Important information that is not available elsewhere can be obtained from an assessment program.

2. The information to be gathered by an assessment program must be information that educational decision makers need and want and *will use* if it is provided to them in a form they can understand.
3. The most logical starting point for any large scale assessment is to determine its prime audiences and their most crucial needs for student outcomes information.

In other words, it is essential to deal with the questions of informational *availability, relation to actual needs,* and *usefulness* in the decision-making process. No assessment/accountability program can be justified merely on the basis of gathering "important" data. As noted earlier, academic maneuvers in the processing of data are of virtually no value. Likewise, any system for storing and retrieving information must translate the data into useful and understandable forms.

A neglected dimension of accountability planning is the educational "social setting." Behavioral scientists and sociologists remind us that successful accountability depends on educators understanding not only technical issues and evaluation methods, but also the intricate social systems in which such procedures will be carried out.

Essentially, the educational social setting is a complex of individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations with differences in roles, expectations, personalities, attitudes, beliefs, values and motives. How each responds to accountability procedures determines the operational climate. Accountability planning, for example, emphasizes the use of performance objectives, but some teachers may believe performance objectives are of no use. If instructors with this view are influential in the school social system, the accountability process will experience severe conflict of interest. If not resolved, such conflict might cause the eventual breakdown of the accountability process as a whole.

To successfully achieve accountability, the following elements are vital:

- A spirit of inquiry about improvement throughout the educational process
- A teamwork approach to accountability problems
- An attitude of personal responsibility among the organization's formal and informal groups
- A shared belief that accountability procedures are useful both for institutional improvement and individual growth
- Group and individual motivation to become accountable
- A mechanism for recording, analyzing, and communicating the continuous evaluation of educational programs
- A set of procedures for coping with accountability conflicts
- Information which describes and explains the relationships among the program's objectives, methods, outcomes, and identified mediating factors.

Accountability planners who understand the educational setting will make provisions for involving people from all organizational levels in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and refining of accountability procedures. They will allot the time and resources necessary to give participants a chance to express their thoughts and feelings about the effort.

Thoughtful planners also will be guided by the likelihood that accountability procedures will generate different degrees of cooperation, enthusiasm, confusion, fear, hostility, and the like. Rather than become "locked in" to a single way of doing things, planners should introduce open-ended proposals and expect to modify procedures and propose alternatives.

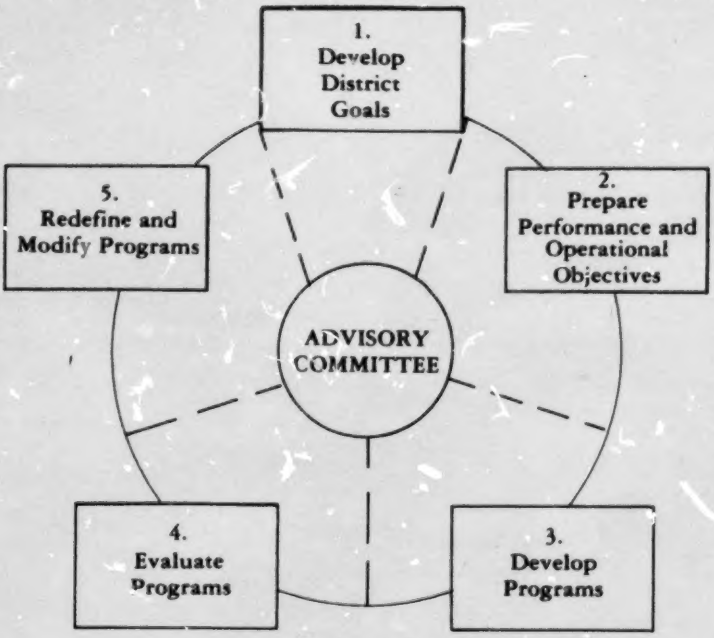
A logical approach to incorporating accountability procedures into the educational program is based upon the traditional steps associated with comprehensive planning:

1. Start at the beginning — analyze existing programs and policies.
2. Gain agreement — sound out those to be affected by the programs and policies.
3. Plan, organize, and schedule new activites.
4. Build support — work with all interested groups concerning the objectives of the program.
5. Make a commitment to the accountability process — including a board of education policy position.
6. Select priorities for action — determine what must be done, by whom, and when.
7. Take action, measure progress, and revise as needed. Consider such questions as: Does the program adequately meet the objectives originally specified? Is the range of results satisfactory?

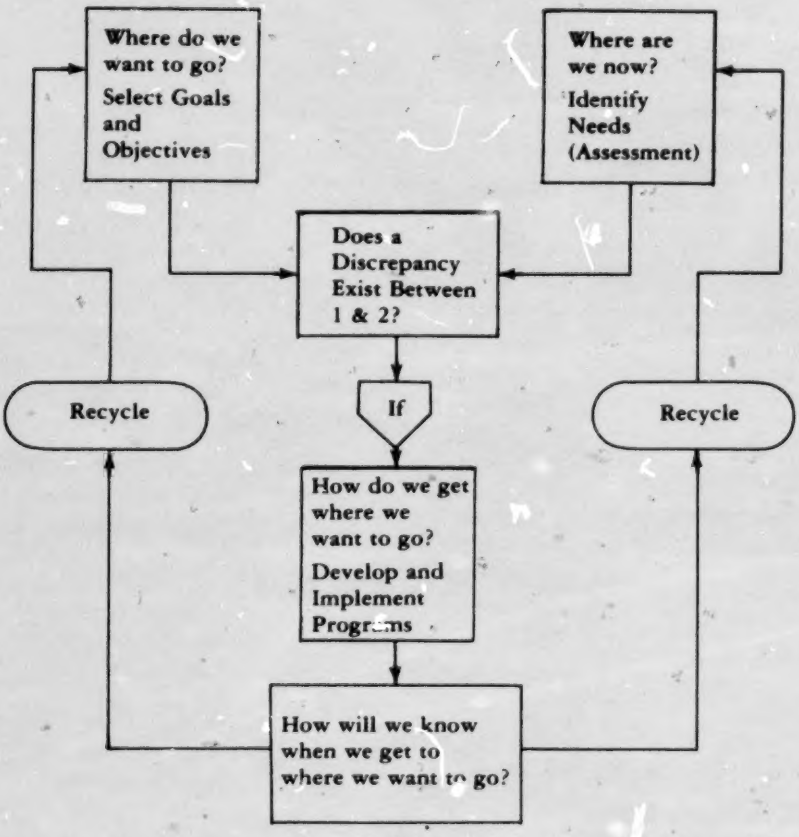
Here are two models in diagram form for starting and evaluating accountability plans:

Model 1 is a general, conceptual model. It can be used to help interpret accountabilty as a *process.* While the phases are placed on a circle, the process need not be entirely sequential. Activity may take place simultaneously in a number of phases. Staff activity and information flow from phase to phase are represented by the solid lines. Advice and recommendations from an accountability advisory committee are represented by the broken lines.

Model 2 is an *evaluation* technique which may be used at any time in the accountability process. It is not a planning model, but rather a technique for determining whether there is a discrepancy between "what is" and "what ought to be." This Discrepancy Model also can be used to assess the total program. Clear statements of program intent must be ma and accurate data gathered regarding program effectiveness, so that reliable comparisons between results and intentions can be made.[3]



Model 1


Where do we want to go?
Select Goals and Objectives
Where are we now?
Identify Needs (Assessment)
Does a Discrepancy Exist Between 1 & 2?
If
Recycle
Recycle
How do we get where we want to go?
Develop and Implement Programs
How will we know when we get to where we want to go?

Model 2

Where Are The Successful Models?

Various approaches to educational accountability have been used: program planning and budgeting systems (PPBS), education vouchers, alternative schools, performance contracting, external program auditing. Each plan places primary emphasis on a different aspect of the accountability process. It is probable that a combination of approaches must be used to achieve total accountability in any given situation. The feasibility of an approach — by itself or in combination with others — should be measured against the application of appropriate criteria, such as:

- The degree of agreement among educational groups and individuals concerning ultimate accountability objectives
- The availability of tools and techniques of measurement to determine educational effectiveness
- A determination of who is to be responsible for what phases of the total accountability effort, taking into consideration financial and human resources.

While laws will dictate the type of accountability programs to be established, usually they are general enough to allow considerable latitude in the development of specific components. The Cooperative Accountability Project concludes that these elements should be part of an effective accountability model:

Goal Review and Development— with community involvement, board of education adoption and policy statements
Needs Assessment— with determination as to where the system falls short of meeting goals, followed by establishment of new priorities
Objectives Development— with the identification of desired educational results and plans for the most effective ways to accomplish these results
Education Programs — development, implementation, and modification if necessary
Assessment and Evaluation— with the identification of program results as related to desired goals and evaluation of program strengths, weaknesses, needs, and cost factors
Reporting and Disclosure— including results of assessment and recommendations from evaluation leading to policy and program adjustments
Recycle the above steps

While it is perhaps unrealistic to point to any single accountability program as a *totally* successful model in these early stages of such programs, it is possible to review certain strengths which have emerged in particular state accountability efforts.

Notable State Accountability Efforts

State	Areas of Successful Emphasis
California	Testing, assessment, and program evaluation, with results analyzed for entire state and reported to Legislature by SDE. Model PPBS system for use at local school district level. Stull bill mandating evaluation of certified teachers' competence in part on basis of pupil progress.
Colorado	Development of goals and objectives at the local level, with emphasis on citizen involvement in goal-setting process through advisory committees.
Florida	Accountability emphasis directed to individual school attendance units. Assessment results reported to SDE by each school principal, thus clarifying role of the principal in total accountability process.
Hawaii	Detailed PPBS system mandated for all state agencies, including SDE. Statewide objectives must be formulated for every level of state educational structure. Alternatives are encouraged for attaining objectives as well as allowances for program selection if all plans cannot be funded.
Michigan	Development of goals with accompanying performance objectives. State is studying complexities of communication process as it relates to accountability.
Pennsylvania	Quality assessment program providing opportunity for school districts to volunteer their participation in accountability operation; response has been very high. Use of indicators. SDE assisting school districts in interpreting measurement results and turning identified instructional weaknesses into strengths.
Virginia	Evaluation of professional personnel. Performance objectives and standards prescribed for state board, local boards, school districts, and teachers.

In summary, public education is in the early stages of implementing accountability concepts and becoming accountable. Models are plentiful in all sizes, designs, and stages of accomplishment. It remains for specific evaluations to be made to determine which approaches are contributing to an actual improvement in the teaching-learning process. State Boards of Education and the state education agencies should take positive steps to provide leadership in this direction.

SECTION III
ACTION ALTERNATIVES

Staff Recommendations

As Dr. Olson's paper has pointed out accountability is actually a systematic planning process. It is a process which through citizen involvement and concensus techniques establishes goal priorities. Programs are developed and resources allocated to achieve the priority goals. Finally the program's success is evaluated and, based upon the findings, program alterations and resource allocations occur.

This paper has clearly outlined the practical steps that should be followed in implementing an accountability process. It should be clear to State Board members, however, that the debate surrounding the implementation of any accountability process can sometimes be very pointed. What must be weighed is the taxpayers desire for accountability against the organized teachers opposition to it. A second consideration is, given the political and fiscal climate within the state and the SEA's staff capability, what would be a manageable and realistic accountability program?

From our perspective the accountability process should move from the simple to the complex in a series of incrementally planned steps. How far any one state would proceed depends upon SEA staff capability, available fiscal resources and the political readiness of the public, legislature and educational community. Another major factor is the persuasive ability of the State Board and Chief. Clearly, however, before implementing any accountability process, the seven steps of comprehensive planning outlined on page 11 should be followed.

Comprehensive Accountability Process — Simple to Complex

Level 1. Voluntary district involvement to assess basic skill areas grades 1-6. Use findings to mount (a) statewide effort to improve weak areas, (b) districtwide effort to improve weak areas.

Level 2. Voluntary district involvement in a grade 1-6 systematic planning process. Parents would use data from Level 1 to establish basic skill priorities. District staff would develop programs and at the end of the school year, assess results. Parents and staff would jointly evaluate assessment results and establish program adjustments and resource allocations for following year.

Level 3. Voluntary utilization of a programmed budget/accounting system tied to Level 2 basic skill priorities. When parents and staff were establishing program adjustments, historical cost data would also be utilized in reaching decisions.

Level 4. Voluntary local district involvement in a new grade 1-6 approval/accreditation process based upon use of levels one, two and three above.

Level 5. Voluntary local district involvement in the allocation of state and federal funds based upon discrepancy between identified and measured needs weighed against program results.

Level 6. State mandates assessment of basic skills Grades 1-6.

Level 7. State mandates a grade 1-6 systematic planning process.

Level 8. State mandates the utilization of a programmed budget/accounting system tied to Level 7 basic skill priorities. (A state level computer system must be on line and de-bugged capable of receiving local district information.)

Level 9. State mandates new grade 1-6 basic skills approval/accreditation process which required utilization of levels six, seven and eight.

Level 10. Repeat incrementally levels one through nine, expanding accountability effort to include all subject areas K-12.

Level 20. State adopts new state and federal funds allocation mechanism based upon a local districts discrepancy between identified and measured needs weighed against program results as determined by mandated statewide K-12 accountability process. (A state level computerized Management Information System and formula distribution mechanism must be on line and degged.)

The preceding twenty level comprehensive accountability process moves from the simple to the complex both in terms of implementation ease and politics. Each succeeding level also becomes more expensive although it might be argued that at level eight, cost efficient decisions would begin to reduce state wide educational costs.

Summarized out recommendations are these:

1. Determine the need for a systematic planning process in your state.
2. Determine the mood for accepting a systematic planning model within your state.
3. Assess the SEA staff capability to give leadership to such a project.
4. Determine how complex and how comprehensive an accountability process you wish to implement.
5. Determine how long it will take to implement the plan, the cost per year, the total cost and the political opposition it will encounter.
6. Develop a budget and necessary legislation.
7. Develop support for your plan by holding hearings and briefing sessions with parents, legislators, the governor, the local board members. Hold special meetings with the organized teachers group to attempt to minimize their opposition.
8. Once funds are allocated, carefully monitor the implementation of the plan.

We believe that at a minimum, a systematic planning process should be utilized within every local school district. How far and how fast any state should move into a comprehensive accountability process is, however, a decision that must be made state by state. Other recommendations urge careful analysis and carefully planned, sequential steps regardless of how far and fast a State Board plans to move.

SECTION IV
APPENDIX

Footnotes

[1] Carl E. Wilsey and Glenn B. Schroeder, *Roles of the Participants in Educational Accountability (Denver, Cooperative Accountability Project, 1974).*

[2] Lesley H. Browder, Jr., *Who's Afraid of Educational Accountability? A representative Review of the Literature* (Denver, Cooperative Accountability Project, 1975), p. 35.

[3] Terrel H. Bell, "Management by Objectives; Planning Where to Go and How to Get There" (Speech delivered to West Virginia Association of School Administrators, Jackson's Mill, W. Va., July 16, 1974).

[4] Ibid. (Reprinted in *CAP Commentary*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Cooperative Accountability Project, Denver, Colo., November 1974).

[5] Leon M. Lessinger, "The Teacher is Not Solely Responsible — System Accountability" (Paper delivered at Cooperative Accountability Project REACT Conference, Denver, Colo., February 7, 1975).

[6] Henry S. Dyer, "Statewide Assessments: Its Future and Potential For Educational Reform," (A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, Minn., March 5, 1970).

[7] National Education Association, *Task Force and Other Reports* (Washington, D.C., National Education Association, 1973), p. 28.

[8] Wendell Rivers, "Psychoeducational Testing: The End of a Controversy?" (Paper delivered at Cooperative Accountability Project National Forum on Educational Accountability, Denver, Colo., May 9, 1975).

[9] Erwin P. Bettinghaus and Gerald R. Miller, *Keeping the Public Informed: Accent on Accountability* (Denver, Cooperative Accountability Project, 1973).

[10] Gene V. Glass, "The Many Faces of 'Educational Accountability'" from *Phi Delta Kappan*, June 1972.

[11] Phyllis Hawthorne, *Annotated Bibliography of the State Educational Accountability Repository* (Denver, Cooperative Accountability Project, August, 1974 Revised Edition).

[12] Frank B. Womer, *Developing a Large Scale Assessment Program* (Denver, Cooperative Accountability Project, 1973).

[13] Malcolm Provus, *Discrepancy Evaluation* (Berkeley, Calif., McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1971).

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An Administrator's Handbook on Educational Accountability. Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators, 1973. 73 pp.

Presents broad dimensions of accountability, some alternatives, plus guides and pitfalls to the school administrator who aims to establish his own accountability program.

An Assessment of the Michigan Accountability System. Dr. Ernest House, Dr. Wendell Rivers, and Dr. Daniel Stufflebeam. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Education Association, March, 1974. 40 pp.

This report examines the Michigan Accountability system with particular emphasis on the assessment program. Reservations and disagreement are expressed about the minimal objectives, the validity of the tests, publishing a book of performance objectives, the desirability of every-pupil testing, and the tying of funds to gains in test scores. Includes nine recommendations.

Barro, Stephen M. "An Approach to Developing Accountability Measures for the Public Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan* 52: 196-205; December, 1970.

Singly or in combination, schools can be made accountable by use of improved or educational audits, performance or incentive contracting, and decentralization and community control systems. The author proposes an approach and methodology deriving from the general principle that each participant in the educational process should be responsible only for those educational outcomes that he can affect by his action or decisions and only to the extent that he can affect them.

Combs, Arthur W. *Educational Accountability: Beyond Behavioral Objectives.* Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1972. 48 pp.

Redefines accountability in humane, professional terms and presents a new conceptualization of the behavioral objectives approach.

Connecticut Citizens' Response to Educational Goals 1971-1972. Hartford, Conn.: State Board of Education. No date. 49 pp. (abridged edition)

A summary report, for public consumption, of the study made to determine public response to possible goals of Connecticut education; completed in conjunction and simultaneously with the Connecticut Reading Assessment in 1972. Concerns six main goals and 82 subgoals. Brief description of procedure used as an analysis of responses is presented.

Resource

Cooperative Accountability Project, a seven-state project begun in 1972, represents an important source of information. Write to: Arthur R. Olson, CAP Project Director, Colorado Department of Education, 1362 Lincoln St., Denver, Colo. 80203.

State Educational Accountability Repository (SEAR), a program of CAP. "The purpose of SEAR is to provide state and local education agency personnel and interested persons access to a central source of materials and reports regarding practices and procedures for developing and implementing accountability and/or assessment programs." Write to: Jim Gold, SEAR Director, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 126 Langdon St., Madison, Wis. 53702.

*The Annotated Bibliography was prepared by Dr. Arthur R. Olson, author of Section II — *Accountability and Assessment.*

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE
BOARDS OF EDUCATION
810 Lincoln Towers
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80203
303/861-0911